



News Release

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LOCAL ECOSYSTEM AND ECONOMY TO BENEFIT FROM GRANTS

The Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) will assist in the creation of more than 30 jobs in north Georgia as part of the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The federal program will subsidize a grant totaling \$897,000 to help stimulate the economy and restore ecosystems impacted by growth and urbanization. The funds will not replace or supplant state mandated GFC budget reductions, but can only be used for job retention or the creation of new, temporary positions in the forestry industry.

“Georgia’s ‘Growing Green’ project will help many north Georgia counties where the highest net changes in employment rates have occurred,” said Susan Reisch, Urban and Community Forestry Coordinator for GFC’s Sustainable Community Forestry Program. “The funding will help create and retain green jobs in nurseries, tool and equipment sales, and landscape architecture, among others. These jobs will help sustain the health and diversity of north Georgia forests, which have been impacted by the pressures of growth and urbanization.”

According to Reisch, funding will be passed to local partner organizations and institutions which provide the mechanism and leverage needed to select tree planting sites and carry out the plantings. Urban forest professionals will guide the strategic placement of trees for economic and environmental benefits such as water and air quality, climate change, energy savings, greenhouse gases reduction, and mitigation of storm runoff.

“On average, Georgia is losing 106 acres of tree canopy per day to urban sprawl,” said Reisch. “This project gives Georgia a unique opportunity to restore trees as part of the infrastructure, which was missing from many original growth plans.”

Designated counties in the approved “Georgia Growing Green” grant include, but are not limited to: Lumpkin, Fannin, Dawson, Union, White, Clarke (Athens), Floyd (Rome), Gordon, Murray, Oglethorpe, Habersham, Morgan, Towns, Rabun, Gordon, Whitfield and Gilmer. These areas have recorded the highest net changes in unemployment rates and are considered to have the strongest potential for building on tree planting capacity.

Funding for this project was provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act). The U.S Department of Agriculture (USDA) is working to implement provisions of the Recovery Act to put Americans back to work and rejuvenate the nation’s economy. The Recovery Act provided USDA with nearly \$28 billion in funding; of that, \$1.15 billion has been allocated to the Forest Service for project work in forest restoration, hazardous fuels reduction, construction and maintenance of facilities, trails and roads, green energy projects, and grants to states, tribes, and private landowners.

For more information about GFC-administered ARRA grants, visit GaTrees.org or call 1-800-GA-TREES.

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